



Welaka Gazette

March 2023

From The Mayor's Desk

In this month's Newsletter, I wanted to update you on our grants and where the Town stands two months into the new year. On a grants front, I have good and bad news; being the optimistic person I am, we will start with the good news. The good news is that the Town has been awarded two grants in 2023. The first is a \$600,000 Community Development Block Grant to install a new AMI auto-read water meter system. We were given a demonstration of the system two weeks ago, and it was very impressive. Some key features include having a detailed report of your water usage that can be emailed to you or picked up at the Town Hall. This will help you keep a closer eye on your water bill and usage, which will help you save water and thus lower your water bill. It will also allow you to notify Town Hall that you will be out of Town so we can mark your account as no usage. If your water meter reports usage, we can call you and inform you of a possible water leak. This will prevent you from having a high water bill and potentially prevent your home from flooding from a busted pipe. A benefit to the Town will be the ability to read meters without needing meter readers, which is currently a full day's work from our Utility Department with assistance from our Public Works Department. This will alleviate our staff to focus on other important tasks. The second part of the grant will go towards rehabilitating Lift Station Six, located on Second Avenue, close to Boston Street. Lift Station Six is the central Lift Station that receives and forwards approximately fifty percent of the wastewater in Welaka to our Wastewater Plant.

We received the second grant from FDEP for \$116,400 to allow the Town to do a flood study of Welaka and the outlying areas, including parts of Sportsman's Harbor area in the County, and in the Beechers Point vicinity. This study will identify the critical areas of Welaka prone to flooding and help us create projects to deal with those flooding issues. The first step was to secure the funding for the study; once the study is complete, we can submit the projects for funding. This is a lengthy process. We anticipate the study being completed this year and the projects submitted and possibly funded the following year.

Now for the bad news, the grant the Town requested for \$8.6 Million Dollars, titled Welaka Phase Two Wastewater Collection System Upgrade, was not approved this funding cycle by the FDEP. We hoped to get this project funded because part of the funding will go towards redoing the sewer system in Sportsman's Harbor. After reviewing the cities that did receive funding, it appears that cities funded the previous year did not receive funding for projects the following year. This was an attempt by FDEP to spread funds to all cities across Florida. We received \$10 Million Dollars in the previous years to build a new Wastewater Plant, so I understand their logic. We worked hard on this grant, sending letters to the Governor and DEP and asking our State Representative and State Senator to support it. We even asked our residents in Welaka to send support emails. In the end, unfortunately, it was not enough to get us across the finish line. However, my commitment to getting the grants to complete this project remains unshaken. I will continue to pursue grants to fund individual parts of the project and reapply this year for the same grant we didn't receive last year. Often it takes several application cycles to get funding of this magnitude, and my goal to get this project across the finish line remains strong.

Now that the bad news is out of the way, I want to cover a few other areas in the Town that we are focusing on. We have applied for a legislative appropriation to pave Second Avenue, the Jim King Trail. I am also preparing a grant application through the Florida Department of Transportation to pave Fourth Avenue. Speaking of paving, our Public Works Department has milled the intersection at Broad Street and Second Avenue by the Sportsman's Condos and County Road 309 at McClure Street to prepare them for repaving. I will keep you

updated as we get more information on these projects.

Our Police Chief, Michael Porath, has also made a Legislative Appropriations Request for \$15 Million Dollars for a new emergency service building to house our Police Department, Fire, and EMS Services. In the coming weeks, we will head to Tallahassee to lobby that project to our State Representatives and State Senators. I will keep you informed on that as well. Chief Porath has also taken delivery of our third brand-new patrol car, paid for by a JAG grant. He has also started the hiring process for a third full-time Welaka Police Officer. As you can see, we are making public safety and infrastructure the top priority in Welaka.

On a Town front, we are preparing to convert the two baseball fields, behind the Field of Dreams on Orange Street, into a new Dog Park. The new park will have a double-pass gate with a breezeway, so if your pet was to get through the first gate, they still have to pass through a second gate. This is important because when leaving the Park, this prevents you from accidentally letting someone else's pet out. The new Park will feature large and small pet areas, so pet parents with small pets won't have to worry about their pets being forced to be with larger pets. As a pet parent, I have a fifteen-pound Chihuahua and a fifty-pound Golden Lab. Recently my Lab stepped on my Chihuahua, which, thank God, did not break a bone, but he limped around the rest of the day. Having a place where little dogs can run around and not be forced to be mixed in with the larger dogs, makes sense for safety. The Park will also have a shaded seating area, water, and equipment specially made for our fur babies. It will also feature handicapped parking and accessibility. We anticipate the project to be completed in six to eight weeks. We plan to do a grand opening celebration when it is complete.

We are also gearing up for the return of Food Truck Fridays starting April 7th. The events committee has moved the start time from 5:30 PM to 6:00 PM to allow the weather to cool off a little before the event starts. In the April Newsletter, we will publish all of the exciting Food Trucks that will be here, along with the types of food they serve. We will also have DJ Dr. Doom from iHeart Radio playing your favorite tunes all evening, along with games for the kids and those still a kid at heart.

Finally, I want to touch on our plans to bring small businesses to our community through Economic Development. While the Citizens Advisory Board is heading this project, I fully support their work. We aim to make Welaka friendly and supportive to small business owners who live in our community and employees who live here as well. I have been in Welaka since I was thirteen, but even before that, the Town had more services to offer our residents. Did you know that as far back as 1903, the Town had a Pharmacy, Hotel and a Grocery Store? In the 1940's and 1950's, we had a Grocery Store, Meat Market, and even a Dry Cleaner. I have spoken to residents who have expressed an interest in seeing some of those services return. Wouldn't it be nice not to have to go to Crescent City or Palatka to do grocery shopping? But we can only accomplish this with a plan. Without a road map, we will wander aimlessly until a commercial developer or big box store takes an interest in Welaka; then, we will be at their mercy regarding what they want to put in Welaka. I don't know about you, but I would much rather see Welaka have a plan that commercial developers have to follow than us be at their mercy. Their goal is to build as economically as possible, and they will not consider whether that is good for Welaka. We stand at a crossroads in Welaka. We speak of protecting Welaka's small-town charm, but without a plan to do so, they are just empty words. The Town must be proactive now, or it might be too late later on.

In closing, thank you again for the opportunity to serve you as Mayor. I promise to keep my nose to the grindstone to seek grants and funding and, with the help of the Welaka Town Council, put plans in place that don't talk about protecting Welaka's small Town Charm, but actually do it.

Until next time I hope everyone has a great March, and I look forward to talking to you again next month.

Very Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie D. Watts" in a cursive script. Below the name, the word "MAYOR" is printed in a small, sans-serif font.

From The Council President

Several residents have approached me in the last month, inquiring about the visioning process for the Town. Many are concerned about where funds will come from, and others are concerned that they will not be a part of the process because they are not in the Town limits. This month, I wanted to take a moment to address those concerns. All the Meetings, in fact all Town Meetings thus far, have been open to the public and all subsequent Meetings will be as well. Even those outside of the Town limits could potentially be affected by any decisions the Town makes. I would encourage residents and non-residents alike to attend these Meetings and Workshops.

The next event will be held on Tuesday, March 21st, when the Northeast Florida Regional Council will host a full day of activities as part of the grant process.

The event will kick off at the Town Hall Pavilion at 11 AM with a walking tour of the downtown area hosted by the Mayor, Jamie Watts. This is part of the grant process known as the Community Asset Inventory Survey. Several State Agencies will be in attendance and will get a feel for the area as well as the infrastructure that is already in place.

At noon we will all head back to the Town Hall Pavilion and enjoy a light lunch provided by the town and NEFRC.

At 1 PM the Meeting will move to the Welaka Forestry Building located at 794 County Road 309, where we will hear presentations from each State Agency. This is an important part of the process as we will be informed of grant and funding opportunities that are available for us to pursue. This Meeting will be adjourned at 2 PM.

We will then reconvene at the Welaka Forestry Building at 5:30 PM for a final Downtown Vision Public Meeting. This will include a presentation followed by open discussion and will end at 7:30 PM. This will hopefully give everyone a chance to have their input considered.

All these events are considered Public Meetings and are open to the public.

I hope to see you there!

In Your Service,

Jessica Finch, Welaka Town Council President



Need A Meeting With Your Mayor?

To schedule a meeting with your Mayor, please go to www.MayorWatts.com and select the date and time that works for you.

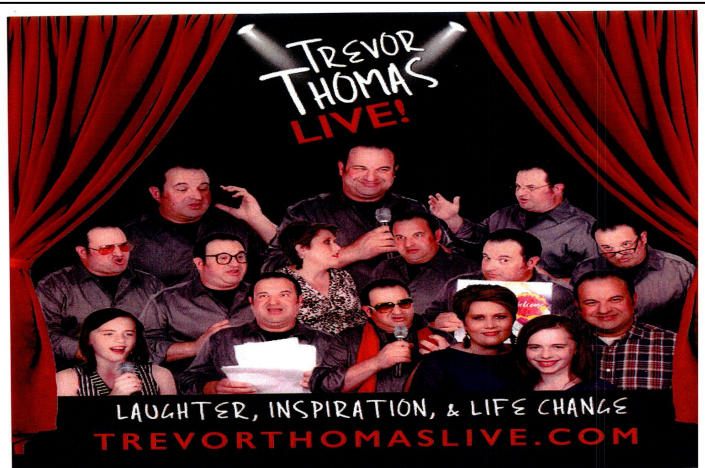


Do You Have News for the Town of Welaka? PUBLISH IT IN THE WELAKA GAZETTE!

For more information, please contact the Welaka Town Clerk, Meghan Allmon, at TownClerk@welaka-fl.gov

**A \$25 REGISTRATION STICKER IS REQUIRED IN ORDER TO DRIVE YOUR GOLF CART
IN WELAKA**

Valid Driver's License, Insurance (with golf cart listed) & \$25.00 (Cash, Check or Money Order)

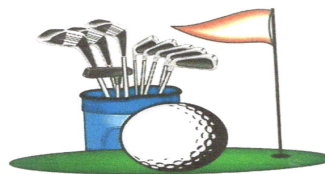


SATURDAY, MARCH 4 at 7PM
 LOVE OFFERING WILL BE COLLECTED

THE CHURCH of WELAKA
 638 CR 309
 386-467-3251



GFWC WOMAN'S CLUB OF WELAKA, INC.
 644 County Road 309 P. O. Box 154 Welaka, FL 32193
 Dec @ 386-546-2754 or Carol 904-347-7758



10th Annual Golf Tournament
The Oaks Golf Club

Saturday, March 4, 2023
 Registration 8:00 am - Tee Off 9:00am
 Rain out date Saturday, March 11, 2023

Scramble - Captain's Choice 1st \$200 & 2nd \$100
 Closest to the Hole - Men and Ladies \$25 each & one Random Drawing
 Club Member \$40 Non-Club \$50

We need Players, Sponsors, and Gift Certificates.
 We need your help to make this the biggest success ever.
Pick up a Form: The Oaks Golf Club, Woman's Club on Tuesday.

Forms returned by or before February 18th Receives \$2 free Raffle Tickets

Immediately following the Tournament, enjoy a complimentary luncheon at the Oaks Club prepared by Welaka Woman's Club and get results of all Winners, Raffle Prizes and 50/50.

A portion of proceeds will be donated to the Crescent City High School Band

Organized 1959
 MEMBER
 General Federation of Women's Clubs International
 GFWC Florida Federation of Women's Clubs
 GFWC Welaka Letterhead 2014-16

Family Fun Day



Day



Bring your family and have an afternoon packed full of Fun, Friends, Music &

GAMES

Saturday, Mar 11, 2023
 1 - 4 pm



40 Acre Park
 Welaka, FL



Snack and water will be provided.

**There must be at least one adult present with the family. (Please do not drop off children unattended)

**This is a family event, please no alcohol, drugs or profanity.

Sponsored by:

The Church of Welaka
 The Way, The Truth, The Life

MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2023 - 6:30 PM
GFWC WELAKA WOMAN'S CLUB



BYOB & BRING SNACKS TO SHARE

Makers' Market
 at the
Woman's Club of Welaka

Saturday, March 18
 9:00-3:00

Live music by
 Cam Gordow!

See you there!

Vendor Info: 904-347-7758

Vendors and crafts!

Food and fun!

MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2023

GFWC WELAKA WOMAN'S CLUB

FREE UF/IFAS EVENTS

5:00 PM - PLANT CLINIC

6:00 PM - LEARNING WORKSHOP
 (INTERPRETING THE FERTILIZER BAG)



Interpreting Fertilizer Labels



Healthy landscapes assist in erosion control, filtering pollutants in stormwater runoff, and improve plant growth and health. With so many products to choose from, making the best choice for your landscape can be difficult. In this learning workshop, we will discuss important components of the fertilizer labels, key ingredients to look for, why weed and feed isn't appropriate for Florida lawns, and how to choose the right fertilizer for your landscape needs.

PLANT CLINIC

All Learning Workshops (except Crescent City), will be preceded by a plant clinic 5:00 to 6:00pm, so bring your plant questions and problems with you. Need help identifying a disease or pest? Bring photos or plant specimens and let one of our Master Gardeners help.

The Presentation on March 16 will be available via Zoom to attend virtually. Zoom registration is required & can be found at: https://bit.ly/interp_fert_labels

- DATES:**
ALL EVENTS ARE RAIN OR SHINE
- Thursday, March 2 | 6pm-7pm**
 Interlachen Community Center
 135 S County Road 315 Interlachen, FL 32148
 - *Thursday, March 16 | 6pm-7pm**
 UF/IFAS Extension Putnam Auditorium
 111 Yelvington Rd, East Palatka, FL 32131
 - Monday, March 20 | 6pm-7pm**
 Welaka Women's Club
 644 Co Rd 309, Welaka, FL 32193
 - Tuesday, March 21 | 6pm-7pm**
 Bostwick Community Center
 1252 Tillman St, Palatka, FL 32177
 - Tuesday, March 28 | 6pm-7pm**
 Melrose Public Library
 312 Wynnwood Ave, Melrose, FL 32666
 - Wednesday, March 29**
Class: 12pm-1pm | Plant Clinic: 1pm-2pm
 Crescent City Commission Chambers
 3 N. Summit Street, Crescent City, FL 32112

For more information:
pjulio@ufl.edu or call 386-329-0318

An Equal Opportunity Institution.

The University of Florida is committed to providing universal access to all our events. For disability accommodations such as sign language interpreters and listening devices, please contact pjulio@ufl.edu at least 2 weeks in advance. Advance notice is necessary to arrange for some accessibility needs.

sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/putnam/

»»»»
SATURDAY MARCH 25TH 12PM-2PM
@WELAKA TOWNHALL

YOU'RE INVITED TO A
Mental Health Awareness Seminar

GUEST SPEAKERS

PATIENTS NOT PRISONERS
 Because Mental Illness is Not a Crime

AGENDA COMMUNITY ASSET INVENTORY

Town of Welaka Community Asset Inventory

Meeting date: 03/21/2023 Start time: 11:00 am End time: 2:00 pm

Meeting purpose: To bring together state agencies, UF experts, and the Town to discuss implementation strategies of specific issues and projects in the Town of Welaka.

TIME	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PRESENTER
11:00 am	Town Pavilion 400 4th Ave. Welaka	Welcome & Tour	Mayor Jamie Watts
12:00 pm	Town Pavilion	Lunch and Networking	
1:00 pm	Forestry Bldg. 794 CR 309 Welaka	Presentations: Northeast Florida Regional Council	Jack Shad
1:10 pm	Forestry Bldg.	State Agency Presentation	TBA
1:20 pm	Forestry Bldg.	State Agency Presentation	TBA
1:30 pm	Forestry Bldg.	State Agency Presentation	TBA
1:40 pm	Forestry Bldg.	State Agency Presentation	TBA
2:00 pm		Meeting Adjourned	

Northeast Florida Regional Council
 and The Town of Welaka

Let's Talk about a Vision for Downtown

**Downtown Vision
 Public Meeting**
 at
 the Forestry Building

Presentation at 5:30p.m.
 Followed by open discussion

Facilitators:

- NEFRC
 - Jack Shad
Economic Development Project Manager
 - Monica Dominguez
Regional Planner
 - Robert Jordan
Regional Planner
- UF Center for Hydro-generated Urbanism
 - Martha Kohen
CHU Research Director
 - Maria Barrios
CHU Research Associate

Tuesday March 21
 5:30 pm – 7:30pm
 at
 Forestry Building
 794 County Road 309,
 Welaka, FL 32193

For more information contact Monica Dominguez
 at downtownwelaka@nefrc.org or 904-537-8554

IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES, TIMES & INFORMATION

Public Notice: If you requested a vote-by-mail ballot to be sent to you before January 1, 2023, you will need to contact the Putnam County Supervisor of Elections Office at (386) 329-0224 to request one for the March 7, 2023 Welaka Town Election. February 25, 2023, by 5:00 PM, is the last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot from the Supervisor of Elections. Due to the recent change in election laws, the vote-by-mail ballot will not automatically be sent to you. You must call and request it.

March 7, 2023 from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM: Election day. The polling location is The Church of Welaka, located at 638 3rd Avenue, Welaka, FL 32193.

March 7, 2023 at 7:30 PM: Welaka Canvassing Committee will convene at the Welaka Town Hall, located at 400 4th Avenue, Welaka, FL 32193, to canvass the election and report the results. This meeting is open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend.

March 10, 2023 at 1:30 PM: Welaka Canvassing Committee will convene at the Putnam County Supervisor of Elections Office at 2509 Crill Avenue, Suite 900, Palatka, FL 32177, to finalize the election and officially certify the results. This meeting is open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend.

March 10, 2023 at 7:00 PM: Welaka Town Council will convene to swear in the two Councilmembers elected along with the Mayor. This meeting is open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend.

WELAKA TOWN COUNCIL CANDIDATES for MARCH 7, 2023 ELECTION

(Candidates numbered in alphabetical order)

1. Candidate Name: Kim Dugger

Party: Non-Partisan

Address: 289 Maxwell Drive, Welaka, FL 32193

Email: welakastrong2023@gmail.com

Phone: (304) 477-5567

2. Candidate Name: Tonya F. Long

Party: Non-Partisan

Address: 711 1st Avenue, Welaka, FL 32193

Email: tflmini@gmail.com

Phone: (757) 291-5420

3. Candidate Name: Marianne Milledge

Party: Non-Partisan

Address: 239 Oak Ridge Drive, Welaka, FL 32193

Email: mspeas@bellsouth.net

Phone: (386) 467-8883

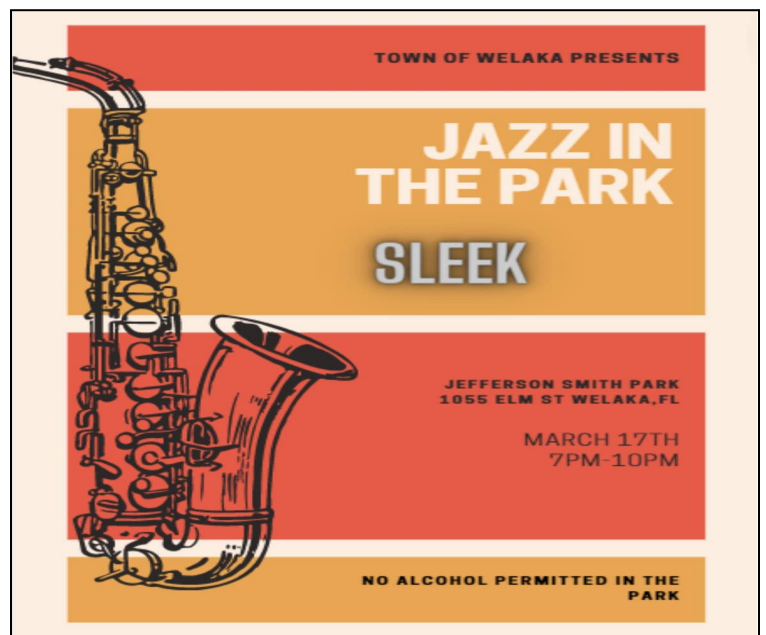
4. Candidate Name: Sandra M. Walker

Party: Non-Partisan

Address: 724 Shell Street, Welaka, FL 32193

Email: flasand67@gmail.com

Phone: (386) 559-0122



TOWN OF WELAKA CONTACT LIST

Welaka Police Department

Michael Porath - Police Chief
Direct Line: (386) 524-4015
Town Hall Extension: 107
mporath@welaka-fl.gov

Welaka Municipal Services

Meghan Allmon - Town Clerk
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 102
townclerk@welaka-fl.gov

Ellen Dickason - Assistant Town Clerk
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 104
edickason@welaka-fl.gov

Welaka Utility Department

Emma Sledge - Utility Clerk
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 103
esledge@welaka-fl.gov

Welaka AFTER HOURS Call Center

(386) 467-8677 / TDD: (800) 955-8771

Welaka Code Enforcement Department

Pauline Kinney (386) 530-0336
codes@welaka-fl.gov

Welaka Building Department

Mark Criswell - Universal Building Inspector
(386) 334-6593
building@welaka-fl.gov

Mayor's Office

Mayor Jamie Watts
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 101
Direct: 386-524-4009
jwatts@welaka-fl.gov

Welaka Town Council

Council President Jessica Finch
(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 2)
Town Hall Extension: 200
jfinch@welaka-fl.gov

Councilwoman Marianne Milledge
(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 3)
Town Hall Extension: 201
mmilledge@welaka-fl.gov

Councilwoman Tonya Long
(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 4)
Town Hall Extension: 202
tonyalong@welaka-fl.gov

Councilwoman Kathy Washington
(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 5)
Town Hall Extension: 203
kwashington@welaka-fl.gov

Town Attorney, Patrick Kennedy
TownAttorney@welaka-fl.gov

Waste Pro: (386) 328-5445

HELP WELAKA SAVE TIME & MONEY GO PAPERLESS

Please let us know if you'd like to receive your Utility Bill via
e-mail and not mailed.

Call or email us or notate on your bill-stub.

Emma Sledge, Utility Clerk
esledge@welaka-fl.gov
(386) 467-9800, Ext. 103 or Option # 3

PAY YOUR BILL ONLINE USE YOUR CREDIT / DEBIT CARDS OR BANK ACCOUNT

Visit www.WelakaWater.com to set up your payments
for single monthly or auto-pay monthly submission.

LATE PAYMENTS OR PAST DUE BALANCES ACTIVE

Bringing the Town current with past due balances, assessing late fees,
cut-off notices and administering door-hangers are no longer a thing of
the past.

**ALWAYS REMEMBER TO PUT YOUR FULL ACCOUNT NUMBER ON
YOUR CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYMENT PLEASE.**

THANK YOU!

March

PLEASE CALL OR EMAIL THE WELAKA TOWN HALL TO
[UPDATE YOUR MAILED PAPER BILLS TO E-MAILED BILLS](#)

2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
						The Oaks Golf Club 8:00 AM – 10 th Annual Welaka Woman's Club Golf Tournament Trevor Thomas Live 7:00 PM – The Church
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	Election Day 7 AM - 7 PM Polls are at The Church of Welaka, 638 3 rd Ave. Canvassing Committee Convening 7:30 PM Welaka Town Hall		Welaka Fire Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Fire Station	Canvassing Committee Convening 1:30 PM Supervisor of Elections Office - 2509 Crill Ave., Palatka, FL Welaka Town Council & Mayor Swear-In 7:00 PM Welaka Town Hall Citizens Advisory Board Meeting 9:00 AM Welaka Town Hall Town Water Flush Day (May experience low water pressure)	Family Fun Day 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM Welaka's 40-Acre Park Lexi's Café Turns 2 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM 676 3 rd Ave., Welaka
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Trash & Recycling Pickup BUNCO 6:30 PM - Woman's Club Events Committee Meeting 5:45 PM – Town Hall Pavilion	Welaka Town Council Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	Meter-Reading Day	Zoning Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	Jazz in the Park 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM Jefferson Smith Park	Makers' Market 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM Woman's Club of Welaka
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup Plat Clinic - 5:00 PM Workshop - 6:00 PM Woman's Club of Welaka	Community Asset Inventory Public Meeting 11 AM – 2 PM Forestry Building NEFRC Downtown Vision Workshop 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM Forestry Building				Mental Health Awareness Workshop 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM Town Hall Pavilion
26	27	28	29	30	31	
	Trash & Recycling Pickup	Code Enforcement Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall			Community Yard-Sale 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM Town Hall Pavilion	